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Snowmobile tour postponed until 2007

LANSING – A legislative snowmobile tour scheduled to begin in early January has been postponed until next winter due to the demands of legislative session and an uncertain weather outlook for the remainder of the season.

State Sens. Jason Allen and Tony Stamas were planning to head out on the third “Snowmobile the North” tour in early January, but unfortunately, unseasonably warm temperatures combined with substantial rainfall melted a great deal of snow, created impassable snowmobile trails. An aggressive legislative agenda for this spring will prevent the trip from being rescheduled.

“I am sorely disappointed,” said Allen, R- Traverse City. “After a great start, winter tourism has really taken a hit this year with the rain and above normal temperatures. Though we may have had some snow recently, it is still too early to tell if it will stay on the trail – which makes planning even an abbreviated weekend ride very difficult. Now with the legislative focus on job creation and the start of budget hearings, we are at a point where schedules constantly conflict, forcing us to postpone until next year.”

The tour was scheduled to begin and end in Grayling and would have traveled both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas.

“The warm weather hit at an extremely unfortunate time,” said Stamas, R-Midland. “Businesses all across northern Michigan rely heavily on the dollars spent by snowmobile enthusiasts. I was really looking forward to taking this trip and highlighting just how important winter recreation is in Michigan.”

Planned stops for the tour included Gaylord, Lewiston, Atlanta, Onaway, Cheboygan, Mackinaw City, St. Ignace, Cedarville, Pickford, Kinross, Sault Ste. Marie, Paradise, Alanson, and Indian River.

“I am definitely disappointed that we had to put off the trek until 2007,” said Bill Manson, executive director of the Michigan Snowmobile Association. “With Michigan’s winter tourism industry taking such a large hit right now, we were really hoping to use the ride to highlight, educate and remind folks on the importance of winter tourism, the excitement of snowmobiling, and to get out and enjoy it because the winter season isn’t over yet.”

(More)

Michigan has more than 6,000 miles of groomed trails offering exciting terrain of forest and field to both residents and visitors. With almost 400,000 registered snowmobiles, contributing more than \$1 billion to the state's economy every year, safe and responsible driving is essential for every enthusiast on a sled.

"We still want to do what we can as legislators to highlight the importance of winter tourism to Michigan," Allen said. "With the shape of Michigan's economy, we really needed a good winter tourism season. With a little luck and some assistance from Mother Nature, we may be able to salvage what is left of the season."

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